REMARKS

In view of the above amendment, applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance.

The Office Action and prior art relied upon have been carefully considered. In an effort to expedite the prosecution the sole remaining claim 6 has been amended to more clearly distinguish the present invention from the cited prior art. Also, dependent claim 13 has been added with an additional limitation.

In paragraph 4 of the Office Action the Examiner has rejected claim 6 under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Shimizu in view of Delaunay and further in view of Yanagida.

In the present invention the heating means 8 comprising an induction furnace permits, by its weak thermal inertia, a strong reactivity so as to maintain the desired strip temperature. The induction furnace therefore allows oxidation control of the strip surface during the transient phases occasioned by the changes in line speed or variations in strip format.

The Examiner's reliance on Shimizu and Delaunay have been discussed in applicants previous responses and are incorporated herein by reference. However, the gist of applicant's arguments will be summarized below.

Shimizu concerns a continuous galvanization process for tempering. The objective is to avoid defects on a steel strip containing Si, Mn and Cr which are easily oxidizable element (see the translation on page 1, paragraph [0002]. The strip undergoes an oxidation treatment between 200 ad 650 degrees C and is thereafter subjected to a reduction in a reheating furnace.

In paragraph [00021], the oxidation treatment is indicated as being done in an atmospheric air.

Shimizu doesn't teach anything about controlling the oxidation treatment temperature by modifying the length of the strip between the exit of the heating zone upstream of the furnace and the entrance and the entrance of the galvanization furnace.

Delaunay teaches that the length of the preheating zone may be modified for controlling oxidation of a metal strip (col. 3, lines 3-24 and col. 4, lines 48-51) and to have an effect upon the transit time in the reduction furnace reducer situated downstream (col. lines 13-19).

However, in combining Shimizu and Delaunay, the modification of the preheating zone length is not obtained by combining fixed and movable rollers

According to the Examiner, Yanagida, that concerns a continuous electrolytic coloration process for aluminum strips, teaches the use of a set of fixed rollers (see Fig 2, roller 4) and a set of movable rollers (Fig 2, rollers 11, 11`) wherein the distance between the movable rollers may be adjusted so as to regulate the treatment time for coloration (col 5, lines 46-57).

Yanagida is directed to art that is quite unrelated to that of metallic strip galvanization so that there would be no motivation for one skilled in the art to include Yanagida in a combination of Shimizu and Delaunay.

In fact none of the 3 cited references show a heating means having an induction furnace, situated upstream of a galvanization furnace.

Furthermore, according to Yanagida, the rollers 11, 11' (Fig 2) are more or less remote, but the strip doesn't wind around the movable roller 180 degrees as currently claimed. This feature allows the modification of the strip length subjected to oxidation for a value equal to or twice the displacement of the movable roller. Therefore, there is an amplification effect that none of the cited references suggest.

Based on the arguments above, the current claims 6 and 13 are believed to be allowable.

In view of the above, consideration and allowance are, therefore, respectfully solicited.

In the event the Examiner believes an interview might serve to advance the prosecution of this application in any way, the undersigned attorney is available at the telephone number noted below.

The Director is hereby authorized to charge any fees, or credit any overpayment, associated with this communication, including any extension fees, to CBLH Deposit Account No. 22-0185, under Order No. 21029-00272-US from which the undersigned is authorized to draw.

Dated: February 4, 2009

Respectfully submitted,

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